

Message Text

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PAGE 01 QUEBEC 00308 180158Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-07 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PA-02 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-02
TRSE-00 /053 W
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P 171945Z AUG 77
FM AMCONSUL QUEBEC
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1082
INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 806
AMCONSUL MONTREAL
AMCONSUL TORONTO
AMCONSUL HALIFAX

UNCLAS QUEBEC 0308

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ECON, PINT, CA
SUBJ: BLAME IT ON PIERRE

1. DOUBLE-DIGIT UNEMPLOYMENT IS FORCING QUEBEC GOVERNMENT TO FOCUS MORE NARROWLY ON SAGGING ECONOMY. AFTER APPARENT PUBLIC DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MINISTER LAUNDRY AND INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE MINISTER TREMBLAY ON ADVISABILITY OF INTRODUCING SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET, THERE ARE NOW STRONG RUMORS THAT GOQ WILL EITHER INTRODUCE SUPPLEMENTAL OR, AT LEAST, ACCELERATE DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS IN REGULAR BUDGET AIMED AT CREATING MORE EMPLOYMENT. HOWEVER, NO REP NO BUDGETARY ACTION LIKELY BE TAKEN BEFORE RETURN OF FINANCE MINISTER PARIZEAU FROM VACATION AUGUST 29.

2. IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY YESTERDAY LEVLESQUE HIMSELF ANNOUNCED PLANS ATTEMPT RALLY OTHER PROVINCES AT PROVINCIAL PREMIERS CONFERENCE AT ST ANDREW'S TO PUT JOINT PRESSURE ON OTTAWA TO TAKE ACTION TO REDUCE "NATIONAL UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEM". LEVESQUE CONTENDED THAT, UNDER PRESENT CONSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS IN CANADA, ONLY FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS POWERS AND RESOURCES ADEQUATE TO
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COMBAT UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEM NOW FACING COUNTRY. MORE POINTEDLY HE ACCUSED FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF PURSUING POLICIES OVER PAST 25-30 YEARS "OUTRAGEOUSLY FAVORING" AREAS WEST OF OTTAWA RIVER WHILE LEAVING QUEBEC AND MARITIMES IN STATE OF ALMOST CHRONIC UNDERDEVELOPMENT.

3. COMMENT: LEVESQUE'S ATTEMPT PLACE BLAME FOR PRESENT

DISMAL ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE ON FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND APPARENT REVERSAL OF HIS PREVIOUS DECISION NOT TO PRESENT SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET ARE FURTHER INDICATIONS THAT FEAR OF PUBLIC REACTION TO STATE OF ECONOMY IS BEING VIEWED BY PQ AS KEY FACTOR IN PUBLIC RECEPTIVITY TO SEPARATISM. PREDICTABLY, LEVESQUE HAS FURTHER SUGGESTED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO REMEDY AILING ECONOMY IS LIMITED BY PRESENT DIVISION OF CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS. UNSTATED BUT STRONGLY IMPLIED REMEDY IS DEVOLUTION OF POWERS TO SOVEREIGN QUEBEC.
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